Race to the Top - District

Technical Review Form

Application #0438AR-1 for Texarkana Arkansas School District #7

A. Vision (40 total points)

	Available	Score
(A)(1) Articulating a comprehensive and coherent reform vision (10 points)	10	7

(A)(1) Reviewer Comments:

**Applicant builds on its work in 4 core educational assurances (Adopted stds & assessments for college-career readiness, building data systems that measure student growth, teacher recruitment & retention, and school turnaround), however, there was insufficient data to support funding for STEM/Project Young Engineer in the building data systems and school turnaround sections.*

Building data systems

1. *Applicant described new data systems to track and compile data (i.e. to hold record, place to compile teacher/principal evaluations), and did not specify how data systems would accelerate student achievement or deepen student understanding in relation to STEM/Engineering*

School Turnaround

1. *Applicant reasoning for turning around the lowest achieving schools was inadequate and vague because the applicant did not clarify how "electronic forms" would accelerate student achievement*

Overall the applicant presented a comprehensive and coherent reform vision to expand the STEM/Project Young Engineer across the district, with the exception of 2 schools. Applicant articulated well their approach, through expanding the STEM/Project Young Engineer program, the impact on accelerating student achievement and deepening student learning by preparing students for college/career readiness..

	Available	Score
(A)(2) Applicant's approach to implementation (10 points)	10	7

(A)(2) Reviewer Comments:

Applicant established an approach to implementing its reform proposal by describing the process of selecting participating schools (i.e.

- Selected 6 schools that were currently in Needs Improvement status out of 8 schools in the district
- 80% economically disadvantaged students
- All schools demonstrate capacity for improvement)

Applicant did not mention why the 8th school in the district was not included or how exclusion of the school would impact feeder schools for the Project Young Engineer program that would be at all other schools, particularly as a magnet school system.

The applicant's approach to selecting schools would have been stronger if the applicant would have described why the remaining 2 schools were excluded; otherwise the school selection process was viewed as just an expansion of the project.

Lastly, with 348 IEP and 26 LEP students, the number of teachers (266) does not seem to be enough.

Overall, the applicant provided detailed descriptions of the targeted population and process for selection schools.

(A)(3) LEA-wide reform & change (10 points)	10	6

(A)(3) Reviewer Comments:

1. *Applicant provided a quality plan describing how the reform proposal would expand and translate into meaning reform for the district to reach its outcome goals and improve student learning.*
2. *Considering the magnet level of the SD, applicant did not demonstrated or articulated how the reform proposal will scale-up and change beyond schools; reform proposal seemed designed to expand what was already in place.*
3. *Applicant did not list/state how funding would allow applicant to reach it outcome goals or improve student learning*

Overall, the applicant provided evidence of a quality plan addressed by the components to implement more schools and expand the STEM/Project Young Engineer across the district but the plan was not consider high-quality because the evaluation of the key goals, rational for activities, timelines, and overall credibility of the plan was an extension of what was currently in place-no new approaches to reform were given.

(A)(4) LEA-wide goals for improved student outcomes (10 points)	10	7

(A)(4) Reviewer Comments:

1. Assessment Performance: By implementing computing devices and PLC, mathematics and science performance goals are not ambitious enough (Currently, math: 71% to 83% and science: 73% to 85% in 4 years.) Considering the program is not new, the increase over 4 years is not ambitious.
2. Decreasing Achievement gaps (Area targeted specifically economically disadvantaged, English Language Learners, and students with disabilities): increasing the amount of project-based learning activities to improve student learning was not sufficient because STEM/Engineering based instruction consist of mostly if not all project based learning and increasing activities would be an overload for students who are already faced with challenges.
3. Graduation rates: goals to raise graduation rates were not measurable (i.e. Verifying the attainment of student skills, ensuring 9th students are on track to graduate, or ensuring ES & MS are engaged in STEM activities)
4. College enrollment: Want to raise college enrollment to 60% from 23%-Considering STEM/Engineering instruction as 21st Century skill-set for college and CCSS, college enrollment was not ambitious enough
5. Applicant goals of performance, decreasing achievement gaps, graduation rates, and college enrollment was not ambitious enough but achievable on a low scale.

Overall, the applicant has demonstrated strides in improving student learning for the targeted population and the applicant's vision to is likely to improve performance. However the applicant's growth over the period of the grant is not ambitious enough

B. Prior Record of Success and Conditions for Reform (45 total points)

	Available	Score
(B)(1) Demonstrating a clear track record of success (15 points)	15	9

(B)(1) Reviewer Comments:

1. *Applicant demonstrated a clear track record of success that represented the past 4 years in advancing student learning and achievement, which the applicant provided in a narrative and chart.*
2. *Applicant demonstrated evidence of improving student learning outcomes during one year, 2009 to 2010, in increasing HS graduation rates at the lowest-achieving school (Arkansas HS).*
3. *Applicant demonstrated evidence of making student performance data available to all stakeholders in ways to inform and improve instruction through every-other-week parent TLI reports, instructional reports sent to teachers, etc.*

But there were areas of concern:

4. *Applicant demonstrated evidence of fluctuating or stagnate improvement across 6 schools in math and literacy.*

- *Particularly, Arkansas HS (the only high school in the district) where Math/Science/Literacy scores were overall low, increases between years were minimum*
- *Fairview ES demonstrated the most significant increases in math and literacy with increases of (math) 21% 2009 to 2012 and (literacy) 43% from 2009 to 2012*

5. *Applicant did not demonstrate evidence of 4 years of improved learning through HS graduation or college enrollment- 74% to 61% to 75% which remained at that level the following yr (2009-2012)*
6. *The persistently lowest-achieving school was Arkansas HS (AHS) and AHS only demonstrated improvement for one year in Algebra (2010-2011); Remediation programs are not effective because AHS offer multiple avenues for remediation (after school, digital math learning software, Learning Over Lunch) but has no impact on increasing graduation/college enrollment.*
7. *Applicant presented no evidence of student performance accessibility over 4 year period, only alluded to ("many years").*

Overall, the applicant demonstrated a clear track record of success by providing evidence of increased student performance over the past 4 years, mostly in ES and MS, but the applicant fail short in some areas (identified above) but in particular, improving student learning outcomes and rising achievement for HS student because of graduation rates (listed above) during the past 4 yrs.

(B)(2) Increasing transparency in LEA processes, practices, and investments (5 points)	5	2

(B)(2) Reviewer Comments:

1. *Applicant demonstrated evidence of a staff contract spreadsheet listing all personnel (a snap shot of 11 teachers/support staff salaries) however, applicant does not have a high level of transparency to the public because district personnel, and not the general public, has access to personnel salaries and actual non-personnel expenditures.*

(B)(3) State context for implementation (10 points)	10	10

(B)(3) Reviewer Comments:

Applicant demonstrated quality evidence to implement PLE

1. *Provided evidence of autonomy under State legal requirements;*

- Program endorsed and aligned with Mayor's initiative

- supported by State Commissioner of Education.

2. *Demonstrated evidence of successful conditions under regulatory requirements;*

- Implication of school improvement plan, and teacher & admin. evaluations

(B)(4) Stakeholder engagement and support (10 points)	10	7

(B)(4) Reviewer Comments:

1. *A description of all stakeholders were identified (the superintendent, 2 asst. superintendents, principals of schools involved in grant, student services coordinator, tech team, data specialist, instructional facilitators, teachers, parents, and students) but applicant did not describe how stakeholders engaged in the process:*

-only listing stakeholders

2. *Applicant used essential question to revise proposal, "Where do we go from where we are in order to push ourselves over the top in student achievement?" However,*

-the question was a revision for the proposal and not based on engagement/feedback of how stakeholders engaged in process

3. *Applicant does not have collective bargaining representation*

-Survey teachers; 25 teacher surveys comments submitted; No evidence of 70% of teachers from participating schools support the proposal because only comments were given without survey questions

4. *Applicant provided adequate letters of support:*

-18 Letters of support from key stakeholders

Overall, the applicant demonstrated meaningful stakeholder engagement considering all but 2 schools in the district would be participating in the grant

(B)(5) Analysis of needs and gaps (5 points)	5	3

(B)(5) Reviewer Comments:

1. Demonstrated evidence of a plan and logic behind the reform proposal;

-plans for current status based on needs and gaps was addressed with increase of intervention software/devices, pd for teachers for STEM content, and increase in data systems.

2. A plan for the areas of needs and gaps, particularly, low college enrollment/graduation, was weakened because the applicant did not address graduation/college-career readiness considering low college enrollment/graduation was a huge deficit in student graduation/college readiness success for the district.

In all, the applicant presented a decent plan however, the plan was weakened because the applicant's argument for mobile devices and data systems seem to be for the uplift of the district and not for the reform purposes of the grant.

C. Preparing Students for College and Careers (40 total points)

	Available	Score
(C)(1) Learning (20 points)	20	13

(C)(1) Reviewer Comments:

1. *Applicant did not provide evidence of students' understanding what they are learning as a key to accomplishing goals;*

-Instead, the applicant asked reviewer to "imagine a day" of what the district envisions for STEM/Project Young Program students

2. *Applicant attempted to justify request for funding for computing tablets & internet connectivity (i.e. why they wanted it without) but not making reference or identifying development goals to college & career preparation.*

-Applicant did not discuss how computing tablets would lead to rigorous study or college-career readiness

3. *All students will have access and exposure to diversity through current projects/partnerships/activities (i.e. experiences building bat houses, taking virtual space trips, and engineering themes.)*

-Applicant identified current programs/partnerships/activities that work with 3 of the magnet schools, which does not include

Arkansas HS, and applicant did not discuss or provide evidence of how those programs/partnerships/activities would impacts Arkansas HS college/career readiness

4. *Applicant stated that they would utilize local stakeholders to master critical content and develop critical thinking & organizational skills, goal-setting, and problem solving but applicant was not clear on how applicant will achieve that goal.*

5. *Applicant argued that integrating technology will ensure student access to a personal instructional approach, timely graduation, and high quality content:*

- *Very brief description of math & science scope and sequence of standards; (i.e. listing 6 math strands from NCTM, and 3 dimensions of NGSS engineering stds which is the current scope and sequence that has not improved or increased/impacted college/career readiness or graduation timeline.*
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6. *Applicant discussed broad overviews of college & career preparedness, (i.e. mentioning different types of PBL activities, reasons for technology and computing devices, but applicant did not discuss or provide evidence for technology or digital learning was aligned with cc standards or requirements*
7. *Applicant did not provide an adequate plan for ongoing & regular feedback (i.e. student portfolios will "provide feedback to future teachers" while not addressing or mentioning cc stds and graduation requirements.*
8. *Overall, the applicant has a quality plan to prepare students for college and career readiness. The applicant demonstrated an approach to learning that was derived from past experiences where the Project Young Programs were implemented and did not expand the approaches enough to create a high-quality plan for all students at differing grade levels.*
9. *More specifically, the applicant did not provide high-quality plan to prepare students for career and college, particularly for student who would be affected during the length of the grant –High school students.*

(C)(2) Teaching and Leading (20 points)	20	10

(C)(2) Reviewer Comments:

1. *Applicants timeline for improving teaching and leading through PD lack realistic support: (examples)*

-Common Core-3x a year; PD time to incorporate and align STEM/Engineering goals and objectives for CC stds and requirements are not ambitious enough

-STEM –twice a month per year; during 1st yr.; not ambitious enough

-Technology integration- 6x a yr; is inadequate considering technology was a huge part of (C) (1) Learning

2. *Applicant focused on pd as a means of teaching and leading to improve instructions. However there were flaws in their argument:*

-applicant did not demonstrate how pd would ensure all students can graduate on time

-applicant did not mention how student progress would be measured

- Use of data to inform acceleration of student progress was not specified.

3. *Applicant did not identify actionable information to identify optimal learning approaches for all content areas but did specify that science stds were not finalized at of date but the state would initiate pd efforts.*
4. *Did not address (iii) of (C2b)*
5. *Applicant provided weak argument for implementing Scholarship teams for organizational and training purposes to structure learning environments;*

-Scholarship model consist of 3 elements that are not aligned with (C)(i)(ii) expectations (i.e. model included leadership training, follow-up training for previous training, acting liaison, guided inquiry and productive work).

6. *Information from district's teacher evaluation systems, educator effectiveness, and steps to improve school culture/climate was not addressed.*

7. *Applicant identified continued efforts to increase master teachers and principals. However, applicant needs alternative plan because of the lengthy certification track that current teachers/principal are struggling to complete (i.e. as mention earlier, there's only 1 master principal, 17 in the state and 2 currently completing year 3).*
8. *Applicant did not mention areas of concerns with hard to staff schools, particularly AHS, content areas, or specialized population.*

D. LEA Policy and Infrastructure (25 total points)

	Available	Score
(D)(1) LEA practices, policies, rules (15 points)	15	11

(D)(1) Reviewer Comments:

1. The LEA central office supports and services all 6 schools; central office consist of all writers/participants of the project. This is a good plan considering it's a district lead initiative
2. School leadership teams was granted sufficient flexibility and autonomy over all listed in (D1b); central office staff had endorsed it
3. Students are given opportunities to progress & earn credit based on demonstrating mastery through multiple ways like vocational Smart Core and CCSS curriculum requirements.
4. However, multiple times was not clearly explained. Applicant only stated that if students failed a course then students would be able to take credit recovery course. No plan was stated for those that fail the credit recovery course.
5. Applicant assigned the ESL Coordinator, Director of Special Services, and teachers to ensure learning resources. Although the applicant stated they provide learning resources and instructional practices, the applicant did not elaborate of what that means for the grant.

(D)(2) LEA and school infrastructure (10 points)	10	6

(D)(2) Reviewer Comments:

1. *Applicant did not address (D)(1)(a) effectively*

-Applicant identified positions as to the tasks persons would be in charge of during the implementation process instead of clarifying how people in those positions will ensure that all stakeholders have access to content/tools/learning resources

-Applicant did not address parents or student accessibility

2. *Applicant provided reasonable argument for 3 tech specialists (1 specialist per 2 schools) to provide support to all 6 schools, as well as the parent coordinator to ensure technological support*
3. *Applicant did not provide evidence that allowed parents/student the ability to export information from one format to be used in other electronic learning systems*
4. *Applicant has in place MyData Button, which is a federal government collaboration b/t the Office of Educational Technology and the White House Office of Science &Technology Policy, as well as student management systems to ensure interoperable data systems. Due to the professional level of the data systems, the applicants have effective and reliable data systems already in place.*

Overall, the applicant's infrastructure supports and ensures all stakeholders accessibility to resources, technological support, and data systems.

E. Continuous Improvement (30 total points)

	Available	Score
(E)(1) Continuous improvement process (15 points)	15	7

(E)(1) Reviewer Comments:

1. Continuous improvement process focused on PD, technology, staffing, and student interventions; All sections are guided by questions that will continuously keep applicant engaged and focused on the improvement process the identified

2. Guided questions for each section where not aligned with the Project Young Engineer's measurable goals of summative assessments, decreasing achievement gap, increasing graduation rates, and college enrollment rates, therefore the goal/purpose for the grant will not be monitored or measured for effectiveness.
3. Applicant did not address improvement after the term of the grant which is problematic because the STEM/Project Young Program would be engrained in the culture of the district and therefore would need continuous goals and objectives to prepare student for 21st Century

In all, the applicant is expanding a current STEM/Project Young Engineer program that should already have components of continuous improvements but the applicant failed to address improvement after the term of the grant and that is a huge part of the expansion and sustainability of the initiative.

(E)(2) Ongoing communication and engagement (5 points)	5	5

(E)(2) Reviewer Comments:

1. *Applicant provided evidence of ongoing communication and engagement through monthly leadership meetings, on-site scholarship teams, and advisory committee to strengthen community partnerships; all listed in district strategic plan this is beneficial/strong asset to the applicant because all stakeholders are within the culture and standard of the district's reform efforts.*

(E)(3) Performance measures (5 points)	5	2

(E)(3) Reviewer Comments:

1. Applicant provided a rationale for selecting performance measures and how measures would be implemented over time.
2. Applicant's rational for selecting performance measures (i.e. graduation/dropout) was explained in the narrative, but the applicant did not mention how graduation/dropout impacted/aligned with information given in the chart.
3. Applicant stated that they used evidence based strategies to strengthen their rationale for selecting performance measures, specifically studying "exemplary" programs already being implemented and dropout risk factors to improve graduation rates. Applicant's rational for selecting performance measures (i.e. graduation/dropout) was explained in the narrative, but the applicant did not mention how graduation/dropout impacted/aligned with information given in the chart; which weakened the response.
4. Overall rational for selecting measures were not very ambitious but achievable, and the applicant did not provide clear evidence of overall participants and by subgroup targets.
5. The measures provided were not rigorous enough, but timely for the areas of concern.
6. Applicant provided a general plan to review and improve performance over time through meetings, surveys, and observations. The general plan was not strong enough.

(E)(4) Evaluating effectiveness of investments (5 points)	5	4

(E)(4) Reviewer Comments:

1. Applicant established a plan of evaluating investments:

- Use of current evaluation systems used by the district for pd, technology, principal/teacher evaluations
- Use of overall guidelines established by the district and state

Overall, the applicant's plan to evaluate the effectiveness of district funded activities were supported by current structures that are already in place to support pd, decision-making structures, technology and the overall Project Young Engineer program. Having these structures already in place strengthened the applicant's response.

F. Budget and Sustainability (20 total points)

	Available	Score
(F)(1) Budget for the project (10 points)	10	9

(F)(1) Reviewer Comments:

1. *Applicant provided tables that identified all funds that would be supported by the grant.*
2. *Funding request was reasonable and sufficient to support the reform; however, the request lacked limited funding for technology (excluding the hardware) and programs/activities for engineering support.*
3. *Applicant clearly provided rationales and descriptions of all funds requested to support the implementation process (i.e. one-time investments, ongoing operational costs, and funding from other sources).*

Overall, the budget for the project was clear and coherent but lack sufficient support for a complete STEM reform initiative.

(F)(2) Sustainability of project goals (10 points)	10	7

(F)(2) Reviewer Comments:

1. *Applicant provided a decent plan for sustainability of the project's goals after the grant by briefly describing and charting the following 3 yrs. of sustainability for funding though potential sources and budget assumptions; however, the applicant did not specify identify/specify funding cost for the remaining 2 schools that would complete the district's reform.*
2. *The response was also weakened because the applicant's budget assumptions did not decrease yearly due to the uses of funds (i.e. software does need to be purchased yearly, pd-utilize train-the- trainer model, etc.)*

Lastly, the goal to enlist 298 district partnerships was very ambitious and not sure if achievable or manageable.

Competitive Preference Priority (10 total points)

	Available	Score
Competitive Preference Priority (10 total points)	10	0

Competitive Preference Priority Reviewer Comments:

The applicant did not request competitive preference priority

Absolute Priority 1

	Available	Score
Absolute Priority 1	Met/Not Met	Met

Absolute Priority 1 Reviewer Comments:

The applicant provided a coherent and comprehensive plan to build on their 4 core educational assurance areas to create learning environments that were designed to improve learning and teaching through personalized learning aligned with college/career readiness and accelerate student achievement and deepen student learning by expanding current STEM/Project Young Engineering programs. The reform program was a good approach to prepare the district for the 21st Century. The applicant's scores would have been greater if the applicant would have scaled-up the reform to be more ambitious and not as just an expansion of what is currently taking place.

Total	210	132

Race to the Top - District

Technical Review Form

Application #0438AR-2 for Texarkana Arkansas School District #7

A. Vision (40 total points)

	Available	Score
(A)(1) Articulating a comprehensive and coherent reform vision (10 points)	10	8

(A)(1) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant expresses a clear vision of reform. The selection of the theme of engineering helps to provide a focused and comprehensive vision. The applicants seem to have a clear understanding of the challenges including dealing with the high economically disadvantaged population and the need for additional STEM professional development for teachers. The vision addresses each of the four core educational assurance areas.The one core area that is unclear as far as the vision is in adopting standards and assessment that prepare students to succeed ion college and the workplace and to compete in the global economy. The plan to provide a one-to-one computing environment is not explained sufficiently to indicate how this will lead to accomplishing this goal. Also, the vision includes a plan to purchase a math and science software programs. There does not seem to be any indication that research has been done to assure that these programs are available or that they provide the functionality listed or will help to accomplish the stated goals. The vision that is articulated builds well upon the existing system requirements and available resources. For example, the vision for the data system is one that improves the already comprehensive system in place and will improve time on task and ability to link student achievement to successful teachers and administrators. The vision that mentor teachers will play a major role in STEM professional development is one that could serve to improve the overall cohesiveness of the educational system. Upper level teachers helping elementary level teachers gain STEM content knowledge could lead to students that enter high school with a better background in STEM content and will help upper level teachers to know the background of the students and thus improve on the learning opportunities for these students. The school system already has a system of learning communities in place and the applicants have articulated a clear vision for using these as well as other professional development opportunities to assure that teachers have sufficient support and training to realize the vision. The selection of school for the envisioned reforms meets the vision of turning around low achieving schools.

Score 8/10 based on a well articulated vision that addresses clearly addresses three of the four core assurance areas. The vision for addressing the assurance area of adopting standards and assessments in not clearly explained in the vision.

(A)(2) Applicant's approach to implementation (10 points)	10	7

(A)(2) Reviewer Comments:

Schools were selected based on population of low income students. The schools selected serve 79% of the total district low income population (a total of 2292 students of the total 2892 students in the district). This includes one high school, one junior high school, one middle school and three elementary schools. The list of schools is included in the narrative. The applicant indicates the total number of participating students (2292), participating students from low-income families (2292), numbers of high-need students (380) and the the number of educators (266). These numbers adequately reflect the requirements to qualify for the grant funds. There is no description of the process that the applicant used to select these schools.

Score 7/10 based on complete data as it relates to the applicant's approach to implementation but the lack of a description of the process used to select participating schools.

(A)(3) LEA-wide reform & change (10 points)	10	5

(A)(3) Reviewer Comments:

The presence of professional learning communities and professional development plans as well as existing partnerships withing the district that are in place currently will help to ensure that the reform will be scaled up and translated into meaningful reform for all school throughout the district. While the applicant indicates that distirict-wide reform is possible and sustainable, there is no clear high-quality plan to inicate how this will be accomplished. There is no indication of what types of professional development will be presented, what the focus of learning communities will be nor of the plans for including partners in the reform scale-up plan.

Score 5/10 based on the existance of opportunities to scale-up the proposal but the lack of a clear plan as to how this will be accomplished.

(A)(4) LEA-wide goals for improved student outcomes (10 points)	10	8

(A)(4) Reviewer Comments:

There is no indication of the STATE ESEA targets for LEAs. Despite this, the applicant does provide a clear vision of action steps, a timeline and responsible parties for reaching the goals.

(a) The applicant provides a clear vision of the target goals for improvement in performance on summative assessments overall and for the student subgroups (economically disadvantaged, LEP and IEP). The list of summative assessments being used in comprehensive including tests for assessment of reading, math, and science. Goals are ambitious and yet achievable and reflect a vision that is tailored to each subgroup. For example, the Goal for the Geometry End of Course test goal is an increase of 18% points for the group overall, but is set at approximately for 24% points for economically disadvantage, 50% point increase for LEP subgroup and a 65% point increase for the IEP subgroup.

(b) The applicant identified achievement groups by comparing proficiency rates on various assessments that are already in place. Specific and compelling evidence is provided to show the achievement gaps cited and the goals to close the gaps for each of the subgroups. More data concerning overall proficiency and proficiency for those not in the identified subgroups would have made a determination of the ambitiousness and achievability of the goals clearer.

(c) Three is a clear vision of the goals for improving graduation rates. Goals for the overall LEA (75.2% to 82%) as well as goals for each of the identified subgroups (Economically Disadvantaged - 66-81%, LEP - 100% presently, IEP 72 to 84% goals). These goals seem to be achievable based on the vision presented.

(d) While no baseline data was available for college enrollment among the identified subgroups, the applicant does show a vision to increase the overall rate of college enrollment as well as a goal for each of the subgroups. This goal does seem to be attainable based on the vision for the program.

Score 8/10 based on ambitious yet achievable annual goals for each of the areas listed (a-d). Deduction of points based on the lack of description of the state target scores.

B. Prior Record of Success and Conditions for Reform (45 total points)

	Available	Score
(B)(1) Demonstrating a clear track record of success (15 points)	15	8

(B)(1) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant demonstrates a clear record of success for each of the schools for students overall. There is a lack of evidence of success for each of the subgroups. Nevertheless, the track record of success is evident for the LEA and for each school individually.

(a) The evidence presented shows an overall improvement form math and literacy scores throughout the district at all levels (K-12). Further, there is clear evidence that each of the schools included in the LEA has experienced success over the past four years. However, there is no evidence of that these improvements represent changes in the achievement gap. While there is some data for some subgroups (ex: special education scores improved 30% in math and 40% in literacy for Kilpatrick Elementary) this does not equate with the subgroups identified in the proposal. There is no a clear track record of improving graduation rates (74.25 in 2009 and 75.15.5 in 2012).

(b) The reforms listed in the proposal are concentrated mainly on High Schools. While these schools are low-performing schools, they do not represent the majority of the population to be served by this grant. Only one high school is a participant in the LEA making up only about 1/3 of the population of students in the LEA. With the exception of the development of the professional learning communities, there is no evidence of reform in the other low-achieving schools participating in the LEA.

(c) There is a concerted effort to make performance data available to educators including PLC analysis of data weekly with the intent of using the analysis to inform instruction. Further, professional development is provided to train teachers in assessment and other instructional areas based on needs identified through the assessments. In addition, teachers are sent instructional reports to highlight effective teaching daily. Students are included in the process of creating reading, math and writing goals and these are adjusted as needed. Parents do receive copies of the academic improvement plans (AIPs) to sign. Beyond the

AIPs there is no indication that performance data is available to parents nor input from them to improve participation, instruction and services.

Score 8/15 based on a clear track record of improvement but the lack of specifics for individual groups and the lack of evidence of reform beyond the high school.

(B)(2) Increasing transparency in LEA processes, practices, and investments (5 points)	5	4

(B)(2) Reviewer Comments:

The plan presented provides for a fair level of transparency. A table is included on the district website that gives a financial summary for the past three years. In addition, Arkansas Comprehensive school Improvement Plans include detail as to the instructional materials used, academic intervention techniques and assessment system, professional development, and office supplies (along with costs). Further, individual district salaries are available through a drop down menu on the website. This does provide a level of transparency for the district. The plan is to provide more elaborative description and costs for RTT-D. There is no description of the extent of format that this will take.

Score 4/5 based on the already existing process for transparency in relation to processes, practices, and investments but lack of a clear description of the plans to increase transparency.

(B)(3) State context for implementation (10 points)	10	10

(B)(3) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant has demonstrated that successful conditions and sufficient autonomy to implemet the personalized learning environments described. Support from stakeholders from vaious agencies serve to indicate that implimentation is feesible and that the LEA has demonstrated conditions and autonomy for implmentation based on the support provided. The Mayor reviewed early drafts and wrote a letter of support for the project. In addition, the State SIngle Point of Contact at the State Clearinghouse was inclded in the review process and was given sufficient time to respond. The state commisiioner of education also provided a letter of support. In addtion, the applicants submitted (and were approved for) an ESEA Flexibility Request. serve to indicate that implimentation is feesible and that the LEA has demonstrated conditions and autonomy for implmentation based on the support provided.

Score 10/10 based on successful demonstration of evidence.

(B)(4) Stakeholder engagement and support (10 points)	10	7

(B)(4) Reviewer Comments:

There is clear evidence of stakeholder engagement and support. The formation of a panel including superintendents, principals, coordinators, specialists (technology and data) parents, teachers, parents and students shows a comprehensive level of engagement. The description of the panel needs to be more complete. There is no indication of the number of teachers, parents, or students included on the panel nor a description of how these individuals were selected. There is clear support from teachers (based on the 85% rate of support on the teacher survey). There is evidence that the panel did reflect on past reform efforts to inform the plan. In addition, they solicited teacher comments to inform the process. There is no evidence that parent or student input was solicited and used to revise the proposal beyond the members of the panel.

Score 7/10 based on clear indications of stakeholder improvement and engagement but lack of parent and student input and revision based on the input.

(B)(5) Analysis of needs and gaps (5 points)	5	4

(B)(5) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant has identified several needs and gaps that will be addressed by the project. They have identified these needs and gaps and have provided logical explanations for each of the reform efforts proposed. It is clear that the intervention software would improve student achievement in science and math. However, there is no clear plan to indicate how the 1:1 mobile devices will be used in the classrooms to improve student learning beyond the use of these devices to access intervention software. Further, there is no clear plan of how the status in implementing this portion of the reform will be analyzed. While not included in the narrative, there is strong logic behind the proposed STEM education improvements, problem-based learning and professional development. All of these include plans for analysis of current status in implementation embedded in the timelines for implementation and plans for review throughout the life of the grant..

Score 4/5 based on identified needs and gaps that are addressed by the proposal with missing information as to the analysis of current status in implementing.

C. Preparing Students for College and Careers (40 total points)

	Available	Score
(C)(1) Learning (20 points)	20	7

(C)(1) Reviewer Comments:

(a) There is a lack of involvement from parents in the learning plan. The applicant states that relationships with students, parents and community would be part of the process for developing personalized learning environments. However, there is little mention of the community or parents beyond this statement. 1:1 mobile devices would help to facilitate the personalized learning plans. The amount of time spent individualized instruction (20 minutes for elementary students) seems ambiguous. It is unclear why this amount of time was selected. The project-based learning modules for middle and high students would provide opportunities for more individualized instruction and allow for a variety of high-quality instructional approaches. The plan does allow for adequate professional development for teachers to implement the proposed reforms. The use of interest and learning style inventories would help to insure that students are involved in learning experiences in areas of academic interest and the use of inquiry, problem-based learning and collaboration would help to ensure deep learning experience as well as improve student skills and traits such as goal-setting, teamwork, perseverance, critical thinking, communication, creativity, and problem-solving. Again, the availability of professional development for teachers would help to assure that these are actually used in the classroom. While there is already some exposure to diverse cultures, contexts and perspectives in the schools, the plan does little to increase this access beyond access to STEM careers.

(b) Again, there is lack of involvement from parents in reaching the learning goals of the proposal. The use of 1:1 mobile devices can help to provide a personalized sequence of instructional content and can facilitate the presence of a variety of high-quality instructional approaches and environments. However, it is unclear what how this personalized sequence will be developed nor of the nature of the collaboration between faculty, students and parents in developing these experiences. While there is a plan to administer learning styles and interest inventories, there is no clear plan to use this data in a collaborative process to create personalized learning experiences. The applicants state that they will select math and science courseware that will provide individualized, comprehensive instruction in fundamental concepts and skills. There is no criteria listed for selecting this courseware no is there any indication that this type of courseware even exists on the market today. There is no clear vision for this portion of the plan. The individualization of learning can help to accommodate high-need students. However, there is little information as to how this individualized instruction and use of instructional sessions via the courseware and internet will help to serve the high-need students.

(c) The mechanisms in place to provide training and support to students to improve understanding and use of tools and resources are minimal. The expectation that teachers will pass along the information to the students would seem to put an extra burden on the teachers. There is no plan for a support system for students. There is no plan for technical support or support for using the tools and mechanisms outside of school time. There is an expectation that the online course programs will provide online support. However, without knowing what courseware will be used or what it will entail, this cannot be determined.

Score 7/20 based on the possibilities for deep learning that provides opportunities to meet the standards for college and career-ready graduation through the use of mobile devices for individualized instruction and the focus on STEM education and problem-based learning. The plan, however, is lacking parent involvement as well as a clear vision of what the science and math courseware will entail or if it is actually available.

(C)(2) Teaching and Leading (20 points)	20	16

(C)(2) Reviewer Comments:

(a) The applicants have presented a clear and comprehensive plan for professional development. The plan includes a reasonable timeline and a description of the personnel involved. Further, it uses a variety of delivery methods and resources. The plan focuses on content that is relevant to the proposed reforms including STEM, technology integration and formative assessment training. The focus on professional learning communities and mentor teachers is valuable to the success of this project. The implementation of the scholarship teams will serve to provide frequent measures for student progress. One thing

that is not evident in the professional development plan is a strong emphasis on implementation of personalized learning environments. The inclusion of all faculty and administrators in professional development will help to insure that feedback provided by the evaluation systems is used to improve practice and effectiveness.

(b) The STEM professional development does provide resources and tools for teaching STEM content. Technology, formative assessment and evaluation tool professional development will provide training in using the tools and data to accelerate student progress and in providing feedback about the effectiveness of the resources in meeting the student needs.

(c) The use of scholarship teams is a valuable way to improve on an already strong record of training, policies, tools and data for creating an effective learning environment. This plan is strongly rooted in research and has a record of success in other areas. The plan to use this system is one that should improve the chances for success of the reform efforts described. There is a clear and precise timeline for implementation of the scholarship teams.

(d) Bonuses for teachers of math, science and special education could serve to entice more high quality teachers to the area. This is mentioned in the narrative, but there is no real mention of how these teachers will be recruited beyond what is already in place. "Building more master teachers and principals" from the existing pool of principals educators is a strong plan. There is already a partnership in place to ensure this. This will help to provide for an increase in the quality of teachers. The use of high quality evaluation and professional development and rewarding effective leaders and educators is a good way to help to keep teachers once they are hired. Heavy reliance on data (meaning numbers only) might affect morale if not coupled with strong counseling and professional development. The plan to remove teachers and administrators after two years if they are not successful (based on evaluations) is good if there is a plan in place to recruit more high quality individuals to replace them.

Score 16/20 based on a strong plan for professional development for teaching, assessment, data collection and usage. The plan lacks a strong teacher recruitment and retention policy.

D. LEA Policy and Infrastructure (25 total points)

	Available	Score
(D)(1) LEA practices, policies, rules (15 points)	15	6

(D)(1) Reviewer Comments:

(a) The applicant fails to include a plan as to how the school district central office will specifically support and services to the schools involved in the LEA. Resources and training listed to not reflect the specific needs or organization associated with the proposed reform.

(b) The individual school improvement plans do represent one example of how schools do do have control over some factors individually. However, there is not sufficient evidence of a plan to assure that schools would have the flexibility and autonomy to control these factors.

(c) (d) (e) It is unclear if the opportunities listed here are already in existence or if they would be a result of the reforms described. Further, there is a lack of detail in the narrative to provide a clear picture of the process that is used "multiple times and in multiple comparable ways" to demonstrate mastery. There is no indication of whether this is in all courses in all schools or in only a portion of the classes and schools. Further, there is no specific information about the Problem based learning opportunities to indicate when and how they are used currently and how this will change (if at all) upon implementation of the proposal.

Score 6/15 based on the presence of some practices and policies to facilitate personalized learning but the absence of detail that is specific to the grant and indicative of change that will be implemented in response to the grant.

(D)(2) LEA and school infrastructure (10 points)	10	6

(D)(2) Reviewer Comments:

(a) The applicant does not indicate how the listed additional personnel will assist in providing access to content, tools and resources. There is no mention of any educator, parent, student or other stakeholder. The personnel listed can help to assure that the reform proposed is successful. However, there is no indication of how this will assure dissemination of information to stakeholders.

(b) The technical support proposed is entirely in the area of curriculum and instruction. The assignment of one technology specialist to two campuses could be problematic, especially early in the implementation of the program, due to the need for

extensive support. There is no mention of technical support for assistance with "troubleshooting" when problems with the technology arise or access to the data is problematic. While technical support for integration of technology and instruction and administrative technology for classrooms and administration in STEM areas, there is no assurance of support for parents and students using the technology as well. Technical support for a 1:1 digital access is critical and the plan does not seem to provide sufficient support.

(c) There is a strong system currently in place for allowing parents and students to access their information. However, the applicant fails to say how this will be affected or enhanced by the proposed system.

(d) The use of the MyData Button will improve the current inter operable data system. Updates to the Arkansas Ed-Fi Dashboard system that is already in place will provide valuable reports for tracking the outcomes of the proposed reforms.

Score 6/10 based on the absence of a plan support for parents and students using technology and lack of description of how current systems will be affected by the proposed system.

E. Continuous Improvement (30 total points)

	Available	Score
(E)(1) Continuous improvement process (15 points)	15	12

(E)(1) Reviewer Comments:

The plan for implementing a rigorous continuous improvement process is very clear and comprehensive. Each of the areas of grant investment, professional development, technology, staff and student interventions is addressed in relation to monitoring, measuring and sharing. In addition, persons responsible is clear for each. With respect to professional development and technology, the questions addressed are relevant and comprehensive. The measurements are appropriate and thorough. The methods of sharing this data for each area are not clear. For example, there is no explanation as to the format that information will take in newsletters, newspapers. Again, the methods of sharing data are not clear. All aspects of the process are clear for student interventions. Questions are relevant, measurements and sharing process are appropriate. While the plan for implementing a rigorous continuous improvement process is strong, it does lack a timeline for implementing the components of the process and for sharing findings.

Score 12/15 based on a strong and thorough plan for monitoring improvement but lacking a timeline for implementing the components of the process and sharing findings.

(E)(2) Ongoing communication and engagement (5 points)	5	1

(E)(2) Reviewer Comments:

The plan for ongoing communication and engagement does not address all stakeholders. Leadership meetings and scholarship teams do not assure communication nor engagement since other stakeholders are not included and there is no plan for communication or inclusion of parents or other community stakeholders in these groups. While an advisory committee is mentioned, this does not address how communication and engagement will be assured.

Score 1/5 based on the lack of evidence that all stakeholders will be included. Some credit given for the ongoing communication and engagement of some stakeholders.

(E)(3) Performance measures (5 points)	5	3

(E)(3) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant gives a strong, research-based explanation of the selection of performance measures. There is no indication of a performance measure for science in grades K-3 despite the emphasis on STEM. With this exception, the list of performance measures seems to be comprehensive, as well as ambitious yet achievable. Plans for measurement are included and logical and feasible for the proposed reform. The way that the measures will provide rigorous, timely and formative leading information tailored to its proposed plan and theory of action is not evident in the chart of the narrative.

Score 3/5 based on the presence of a broad range of ambitious and achievable performance measures but the lack of a clear description of how the measures will provide information.

(E)(4) Evaluating effectiveness of investments (5 points)	5	5

(E)(4) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant presents a strong and thoughtful plan for assuring that time, staff, money and other resources are used in a productive manner. The state requirements for reporting how schools spend federal funds for increasing acheivement will help to ensure this is the case. Further, plans for oversight of portions of the grant by the director, leadership team, STEM coordinator, media specialists provide a comprehensive evaluative process.

Score 5/5

F. Budget and Sustainability (20 total points)

	Available	Score
(F)(1) Budget for the project (10 points)	10	10

(F)(1) Reviewer Comments:

The budget tables and narrative identifies all funds that will supprot the project. This includes Race to the Top Grant Funds as well as other funds including Title I, Title IIA, Magnet School Assistance Grants, Title IV-A, eRate, and IDEA grants. The amount request seems sufficient to support the program as described in the proposal. Further, the amount requested seems reasonable to supoprt the project as described. Rationale for expenses are clear and complete.

Score 10/10 based on complete description of all fuds and reasonable and sufficient fund requests.

(F)(2) Sustainability of project goals (10 points)	10	7

(F)(2) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant has a broad range of funding sources in place currently which should be available to help sustain the reforms proposed. Beyond suggesting a search for further grant funds there is no plan to consider how the project will be sustained if further external grant funding is not available.

Score 7/10 based on the availability of other grant funds beyond the scope of the RTT-D grant but lack of a plan to continue to sustain those portions of the reform that cannot be funded through existing funds.

Competitive Preference Priority (10 total points)

	Available	Score
Competitive Preference Priority (10 total points)	10	0

Competitive Preference Priority Reviewer Comments:

No description available. The applicatn did not address this sub-criterion.

Absolute Priority 1

	Available	Score
Absolute Priority 1	Met/Not Met	Met

Absolute Priority 1 Reviewer Comments:

The applicant has addressed how it will build on the core educational assurance areas to create learning environments designed to improve teaching and learning thought the personalization of the educational experience. They have proposed a one to one computing environment to address individual needs of students. Further, they have proposed a plan to enhance

STEM learning in the schools and thus explore future career options in these areas. The applicant ha proposed a plan to further improve an already comprehensive data system through the addition of the MyData Button system. A plan to use the data to inform and improve education and to disseminate information have been proposed. Systems for teacher evaluation, reward and professional development have been proposed to assist in recruiting, developing, rewarding and retaining effective teachers and principals. Finally, the applicant has a plan for improving individualized educational experiences, tracking progress and using data to improve teaching are in place to assure that the low achieving schools are making progress toward the goals set forth in this proposal.

Total	210	134

Race to the Top - District

Technical Review Form

Application #0438AR-3 for Texarkana Arkansas School District #7

A. Vision (40 total points)

	Available	Score
(A)(1) Articulating a comprehensive and coherent reform vision (10 points)	10	10

(A)(1) Reviewer Comments:

Texarkana Arkansas School District's (TASD) vision is a very strong component of its proposal. Its vision is comprehensive and coherent. It also is credible and compelling. First, it has a strong rationale and theme. The background of the district and its community is artfully described and a theme (engineering) was chosen as the focus of the grant. TASD's vision centers around the four RTTT assurance areas. Strategies to build on work done in each of the four assurance areas are explicitly described and are sound and promising. For example it will build on its work in adopting standards and assessments by using the Arkansas Ed-Fi Dashboards, TLI, a curriculum, assessment, and data reporting website, norms that report on state performance of schools, and Hive, an online community allowing users to compare assessment data in relation to improving education and decision making. These will be married to professional learning communities; professional development will be provided, and with the addition of other elements, will be used in the annual school improvement plan to strengthen the use of standards and assessments at each school.The rationale and strategic vision for each assurance was of very high quality with great promise for accelerating student learning and increasing equity through personalized learning environments. Vision was scored in the very high level of quality.

(A)(2) Applicant's approach to implementation (10 points)	10	9

(A)(2) Reviewer Comments:

TASD did not explicitly describe the process used to select 6 of its 8 schools. But it did state that there were many discussions among educators and stakeholders about the project. It also provided the criteria used for selection. They provided evidence that this process was deeply researched and thoughtfully analyzed. The schools chosen to participate in the project were selected because of their persistently low achievement status, amount of high needs students based on poverty rate, and their demonstrated capacity for improvement in the four core educational performance areas. Also considered were assessment results and the extent to which schools employed robust data systems. These are valid criteria on which to base selection of schools. Schools chosen met the competition's eligibility requirements and were listed in the narrative, as required. The district provided data to clarify the number and percentages of participating students and the breakdown of these students as required in the notice. The scope and depth of description of the selection process was very strong. A more complete explanation as to why two schools were not selected would have strengthened this section. The approach to implementation was scored in the very high range.

(A)(3) LEA-wide reform & change (10 points)	10	8

(A)(3) Reviewer Comments:

Because the district included 6 of its 8 schools comprising 79 per cent of the total district population, a deep explanation of how the district would scale up was not necessary. It was not necessary to provide a high quality plan but some explanation as to what will be done to ensure that the other two schools and their students are profiting from the project and afforded equal opportunities was needed. The district describes how central elements of the work would be employed to have an impact on all educators. For example it stated " PLCs must be embedded in every part of TASD in order to provide sustainable change." While it did not provide a logic model or articulate an explicit theory of change, it identified key elements as keys of success for successful change. The first is central focus; Project Young Engineer will be implemented in all six schools and serve as the vehicle for school reform and the creation of personalized learning environments. It will be built on the four core assurance areas. Three sound strategies, (1) teachers working together in PLCs and other team structures, (2) intense, focused professional development, and (3) a culture promoting motivation and teacher satisfaction strengthend the proposal. Because of the scope of school inclusion, strong alignment with the four assurance areas, and strategies that focus the project it was judged to be of high quality.

(A)(4) LEA-wide goals for improved student outcomes (10 points)	10	10

(A)(4) Reviewer Comments:

TASD developed four goals that align to requirements in the notice for this section. For example, Goal1: Performance on summative assessments was to : "Raise overall distract math proficiency rates to 83%, rising at least three percentage points per year through SY 2016-2017." A similar measure was provided for science. These and the others appear to be ambitious and achievable. Key activities, a rationale, timelines, and responsible parties were provided in chart form for each goal in the four areas.They clearly addressed summative assessments, the need to close the achievement gaps,and graduation and college-ready rates. Key activities were clear and strong. Timelines and responsible parties appeared to be logical and well determined. For example, to reach the goals related to performance on summative assessments, "Improving professional learning communities work at each school site to better link student data to teacher effectiveness through the use of scholarship teams," was identified as a key objective. Its rationale centered on the need for robust leadership, of one-time training and development, and use of a structured protocol.The timeline was January 2013 to May 2015 and the responsible parties were teachers, principals, the project director, and external providers. In general the objectives and rationale were described well and the timelines and responsible parties were on target. This was a very strong section. Because of its high quality plan it earned a very high rating.

B. Prior Record of Success and Conditions for Reform (45 total points)

	Available	Score
(B)(1) Demonstrating a clear track record of success (15 points)	15	14

(B)(1) Reviewer Comments:

TASD explained that it became a magnet school system in 2005 starting with the elementary and middle schools and moving to include a junior high school and high school in 2006. Evidence of advances made in professional development and data that elevated levels of professional preparation were provided. For example, 67 teachers earned Masters' degrees and one principal achieved the status of Master principal through a state process. These are important and strengthen the proposal. Progress in student learning was provided for 2010 to 2012 for each school and for the district in grades K-5, 6-8, and 9-12. The results are positive. Each level made progress in literacy and mathematics with K-5 showing the greatest growth. Scores in literacy rose from 63.8 to 81.7 and mathematics from 73.6 to 85.1. Grades 6- 8 and 9-12 also made significant progress; 6-8 elevated proficiency math by 16 percentile points and 9-12 literacy by 10 points. Each also showed gains in the other subjects of about 4 points. Given the relative newness of the school these data support their track record of success. TASD also provided evidence of some success in persistently lowest-achieving schools. One school, a "needs improvement Focus" school, reached annual measurable objectives and another (School Improvement Model) significantly raised proficiency scores and closed gaps between sub-groups. There was evidence that TASD has achieved ambitious and significant reforms in low performing schools. For example, Vera Kirkpatrick Elementary has made significant progress and been in the SIM project for the last 2 years. Arkansas High School, now in the top 5 most improved high schools in the southwest region for Algebra

achievement, is part of the Arkansas Leadership Academy. It has made progress in aligning curriculum with assessments and in improving pedagogy through staff development. North Heights has adopted a district professional development model, Workshop, and a number of reform interventions related to standards. These strengthen their proposal in this section.There is ample evidence that student performance data are made available to students, educators and parents. Professional learning communities in all schools are provided data as a part of the school improvement process. Parent TLI (the data system) reports are sent home after each lesson module is completed, approximately every other week. TLI and Academic Improvement Plans (AIP) are provided to parents who sign the AIP. In total, TASD has a strong track record of success. This area received a very strong rating.

(B)(2) Increasing transparency in LEA processes, practices, and investments (5 points)	5	1

(B)(2) Reviewer Comments:

TASD places its Title 1 school improvement plans on the website. These plans include salaries of instructional and support staff paid through Title 1. There was nothing in the application to indicate that TASD makes transparent any other actual personnel salaries at the school level. Thus, this area was scored at the low level of quality.

(B)(3) State context for implementation (10 points)	10	7

(B)(3) Reviewer Comments:

TASD presented evidence that there are conditions for success and sufficient autonomy under State and regulatory requirements to implement the personalized learning environments; it referenced a number ofState requiremnts and statutes that cede them proper authority. There are conditions that support success. The mayor has provided an enthusiastic letter of support. The application has been reviewed and it has been signed off by the State Clearinghouse Office, and a letter of support was provided by the Arkansas state superintendent. Others letters of support were provided, including one from a representative of the NAACP. More importantly, the district approach to school improvement is inextricably intertwined with state school improvement strategies. Use of the SIM Model and other structures referenced in Section B(1) of this evaluation provide evidence of the tight linkage between the district approach to school improvement and the State. The analysis of how the district will build on the four assurance areas revealed that the district is proposing to strengthen, integrate, and improve current approaches and bring them together in a more coherent way under a theme. A more complete explanation of this would have strengthened this section. It earned a high middle level rating.

(B)(4) Stakeholder engagement and support (10 points)	10	6

(B)(4) Reviewer Comments:

There was evidence that key stakeholders were engaged in the development of the proposal. Inclusion of principals from each participating school, parents, students, a technology team, the student services coordinator, data specialist, and instructional facilitators, as well as the superintendent and two assistant superintendents reflects a broad base of expertise and engages those who need to make things work and work well. Teachers were surveyed to solicit their input and support for the project. The survey asked teachers to recommend what they would change if they could change one thing about this district in the area of STEM and Common Core Standards. Many teachers expressed a view that more professional development was needed. The district asserted that 85 per cent indicated they would support the RTTD project. But some important information was not provided that would have strengthened this section: more specificity about the panel including number and type of teachers, number of parents and students and levels represented, and number of meetings and when they were held. The notice stipulates that in an LEA without collective bargaining the district must provide evidence that at least 70 per cent of the teachers at each school support the project. While the district reported 85 per cent were in support, the survey info did not address that or provide eveidence of 70 per cent support at each school. Letters of support were obtained from 15 members or entities within thin the community. But a number of them were from teachers and others with a district connection and none from non profits, parent groups, the business community or other community organizations. In fairness, to what extent those types of organizations exist in the community is unknown so they were not heavily weighted in the evaluation. Because of the lack of information about the panel and other shotcomings identified above this the section was rated at the middle level of quality.

(B)(5) Analysis of needs and gaps (5 points)	5	5

(B)(5) Reviewer Comments:

TASD provides ample evidence that through dialogue, surveys, test and try, and other inputs and analysis that they have identified their needs and what gaps exist. The information provided in the proposal makes it clear that it has effectively analyzed its current status in implementing a personalized learning environment. They have identified areas that reflect their greatest needs and gaps: one-to-one mobile device/intervention, software, professional development and project-based learning for STEM. The logic behind their analysis and conclusions is clear and makes sense. For example, they assert project-based learning was identified as a need because the district is transitioning from traditional lecture to constructivist learning because students learn best through reflection, research, discovery, application, and communication. It chose STEM because its approach and strategies fit their vision and meet their needs.The need to effectively provide top notch instruction to facilitate learning in science and math is clear to the district as are the areas where gaps exist. For example, it is logical that they would be able to discern that many teachers are not prepared to teach these subjects because they lack the content knowledge and pedagogical skills needed. TASD provided a clear and thorough rationale for each of the gaps and needs identified. Analysis of needs and gaps earned a very high quality rating.

C. Preparing Students for College and Careers (40 total points)

	Available	Score
(C)(1) Learning (20 points)	20	13

(C)(1) Reviewer Comments:

This area could not earn very high quality status because it did not contain all the elements of a high quality plan. TASDs plan for learning rests on a three pronged platform: (1) computing tablets stored in mobile labs, (2) technology, and (3) teacher learning. As teachers learn they will provide training and support to students to ensure they understand how to use technology tools and resources provided to them in order to manage their own learning. TASD has determined that three elements of that platform have the collective power to create and sustain personalized learning environments.They assert, for example, that computer tablets empower students of all ages to be responsible for their own learning, to track that learning,and to proceed at their own pace, And they believe that they provide a powerful vehicle for connecting students, their parents and their teacher(s). They are durable, have touch screen technology, create opportunities for project learning, and have thousands of free applications and resources for student use. The applicant delves much deeper into how computer tablets can be used and the potential benefits and outcomes from their use. This strengthened the proposal. Technology is perceived to play a critical role in elevating project success.TASD explains that its power for providing access to information is one reason why technology is a huge factor in the success of the project. In addition, technology provides access to expertise and information that is outside the grasp of educators currently. It is an integral vehicle for promoting the success of Project Learning. For example, technology enables teachers to form and facilitate a community of on-line learners and for that community to connect and function as a team in solving problems. Finally, the district provides strong evidence for the use of technology as the catalytic vehicle to create and sustain a personalized learning environment. It will be used to set and track student goals, expand content access and align it with objectives, align it with college and career-ready standards, and provide ongoing feedback to students.The applicant strongly supports training and supports its use to ensure they understand how to use technology tools and resources to track and manage their own learning. The proposal has mechanisms and processes in place to ensure that students know how to use these resources to manage their own learning. The districts training design proposes that all training is designed in such a way that teachers inculcate in their students what they are learning in training so that students can use technology to manage their own learning. It also envisions students with access to robotics, sophisticated science labs, and cameras and microscopes attached to computers. In sum, learning was a solid section that would have been stronger had it contained the elements of a high quality plan. Clear key goals, deliverables, timelines,and responsible parties would have significantly strengthened this area of the proposal. It was scored in the middle level of quality.

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	Available	Score
(C)(2) Teaching and Leading (20 points)	20	14

(C)(2) Reviewer Comments:

TASDs plan for teaching did not include the elements of a high quality plan. It was framed by four elements: professional development, delivery, persons involved, and timelines. While the framework is useful it does not strengthen the plan to the extent that it would if it identified outcomes, delivery systems, responsible parties, and timelines that focused on starting, key, and ending dates. The framework, however, does promote understanding of the approach. It clarifies the project elements to be targeted, the various delivery methods, who will attend, and the number of times per year they will attend. Those are strengths. The professional development topics for teachers

that focused on technology integration were specifically identified. Identifying technology integration as a target and how it will be delivered and reinforced throughout the year strengthens the proposal in this area. It is noteworthy that principal training was addressed in this area as well. Supporting the technology integration thrust and training will be an Instructional Technology Facilitator who will be supported by RTTD funds. A solid approach to targeting STEM professional development was provided. It included 7 sound objectives and proposed integrating STEM instruction into all areas of the curriculum and planning real-world, problem-based learning. Their objectives were tightly aligned to the project goals, targeted teachers and principals, and strengthened the project. TASD proposes the use of scholarship teams to promote teacher collaboration, project implementation, and educator use of tools and resources. It identified topics to be addressed by scholarship teams.The 7 steps are aligned to what many see as essential elements of effective instructional improvement. For example, these steps include identify, prepare-deliver, analyze, assess and reflect. Approaches that appear aligned to effective instruction strengthen the project in this area. A detailed timeline for launching implementation of scholarship teams was well designed. The district described aspects of Young Project Engineer which targets increasing the number of students who receive instruction from effective and highly effective teachers and principals. Activities include a partnership with the Leadership Institute in Arkansas that assists in developing Master principals and counseling out those who receive poor evaluations. There are facets of Project Young Engineer that specifically are designed to promote the use of teacher evaluation to improve performance. This was specified in the notice and strengthened the proposal. In sum, the district addressed the elements in the notice in a relatively strong manner. The lack of the structure provided by framing it in the elements of a high quality plan diminished its strength and made it more difficult to understand the extent to which it will truly promote teaching and leading and will make it more difficult to implement. TASD earned a high middle level rating in this area. .

D. LEA Policy and Infrastructure (25 total points)

	Available	Score
(D)(1) LEA practices, policies, rules (15 points)	15	8

(D)(1) Reviewer Comments:

TASD provides considerable evidence that it has LEA practices, policies,and rules in place to provide needed support and resources to schools and stakeholders. Many of them were described in earlier sections of the proposal. For example, district administrators work closely with schools through advisory committees and vehicles designed to enhance planning, monitoring, and decision making. Central office administrators have regularly scheduled end-of-the-year meetings with the principals on teacher evaluation. Advisory panels have been formed and a number of committees have been named and members identified who will be tasked improving specific aspects of support and service.The leadership teams that the district supports in each of the schools are important vehicles for promoting project success. It is not clear, however, to what extent they have flexibility and autonomy. A definite strength of this area is the approach to giving students the opportunity to demonstrate mastery and do it at multiple times in multiple comparable ways.This important aspect is a fundamental purpose of the STEM project. Tablet computers and the integrated technology the district proposes are powerful levers for implementation and strengthen the quality of the proposal. The proposed project also includes a strong set of strategies for ensuring that resources and practices are accessible and adaptable. Many of the tools are cutting edge technology designed for exactly that. For example, tools such as one-on-one mobile devices, tablet computers, and others will be wrapped in an integrated technology system thus promoting maximum flexibility and district wide use. Among the plethora of resources available to students and teachers are on-line access to videos, chat lines, and a multitude of free applications. Professional development of teachers will focus on two things: use of that technology and adoption and use of pedagogy to maximize their use. These learning resources and instructional practices strengthen the proposal. The district has practices, policies, and rules to support implementation. It did not provide key goals, activiteis, deliverables, timelines, responsible parties. While it had overall credibility, the other important elements of a high quality plan were missing and it was judged to be of middle level quality.

(D)(2) LEA and school infrastructure (10 points)	10	8

(D)(2) Reviewer Comments:

LEA and school infrastructure are strong. The district has elements in place that provide the necessary support and resources needed to successfully implement personalized learning environments. First, they will have adequate personnel to provide support and assist them in accessing or obtaining resources. Additional personnel will also be in place through grant funding. These include a Director of Project Young Engineer, the STEM Instructional Facilitator and the Technology Instructional Facilitator. The Technology Instructional Facilitator will spearhead technology support aided by the addition of three Technology Specialists hired through RTTD funds. Stipends for 12 certified math teachers will enable them to provide after school tutoring three days a week. It noted that a detailed list of central office personnel who support school reform was provided but it was not in the appendix as listed. Personnel support is strong. The Technology Facilitator is the spearhead for support in technical training to ensure effective use of technolgy. Each of the three new Technology Specialists will be assigned the responsibility for technical support in two schools. Other technical support will be provided through central office

and the leadership of STEM and Project Young Engineer leaders.The use of Information technology systems to allow parents to export their information on an open system is the very heart of the project. They are very strong in this area and will be able to employ an interoperable data system for district and school use. While some of the important aspects of the LEA and school infrastructure are not explicitly addressed in this section they are provided in earlier sections and are strong. TASD earned a high level of quality in this area.

E. Continuous Improvement (30 total points)

	Available	Score
(E)(1) Continuous improvement process (15 points)	15	8

(E)(1) Reviewer Comments:

TASD provided a template that will be used to ensure transparency of successful grant activities and lessons learned throughout the four years of grant implementation and beyond. A template with three elements aligned to the notice elements framed the effort: (1) grant investment, (2) monitoring/measuring/ sharing, and (3) persons responsible. Three grant investments were targeted for continuous improvement: professional development, staff, and student interventions. A number of questions were provided to guide the monitoring, measurement and sharing. These questions were comprehensive and were aligned with the project initiatives and objectives. The identification of persons responsible was sound. These added strength to the area. In previous sections many sound strategies were provided that showed evidence of the district's ability to continuously improve nearly every aspect of the project and to create a culture of continuous improvement. For example, the district will convene stakeholders in May and and June to discuss every facet of the program and identify areas for improvement. However, the failure to develop a plan with goals, deliverables and timelines significantly diminished its strength in this area. Because the plan lacks sufficient structure to provide a valid approach to continuously evaluate project elements and make key decisions that impact project success, it was rated of middle level quality.

(E)(2) Ongoing communication and engagement (5 points)	5	2

(E)(2) Reviewer Comments:

TASD provided a paradigm to frame the communication effort:; each stakeholder will view inquiry through three lenses; researcher, curriculum developer, and student. While these lenses are useful in guiding project engagement TASD provided little evidence of a plan or even sound strategies for ongoing communication with internal of external stakeholders. This weakened the quality of this area. The district did provide specific activities to promote engagement. For example, an advisory committee to strengthen community partnerships was provided and three committees (Curriculum Assessment and Investment, Community and Schools, and Facilities) were designated to increase stakeholder involvement in the work. Committee members were named for each and included district staff, community members, and business partners. Only one parent and no students were included in committees, weakening the quality of the strategy. It should be noted that a number of strategies for enhancing ongoing communication and stakeholder support were provided in earlier sections and in the appendix. These include school improvement teams, the integrated technology system, and multiple events and meetings to assess progress and make decisions to improve practices and structures. In sum, the district has created an approach that has mechanisms for ongoing communication and stakeholder support embedded in them. However, because the approach or strategies for how communication and support would be organized and coordinated.was not provided, it earned a low middle rating.

(E)(3) Performance measures (5 points)	5	5

(E)(3) Reviewer Comments:

The performance measure area is strong. TASD employed evidence-based strategies to strengthen its rationale for selecting performance areas. For example, it studied exemplary programs and examined dropout risk factors. It also studied student assessment data and principal evaluations conducted during the 2011-2012 school year by the superintendent and assistant superintendent. Performance measures were developed for the appropriate groups and sub-groups and grade levels. Eighteen performance measures will provide the data for many of the groups and subgroups. These measures appeared to be ambitious and achievable. For example, 56 percent of the current high school students are on track to college and career readiness. A target of 79 percent was set for 2016-2017 (post grant). It is ambitious because it means the project must achieve at a high level. And it is doable because it requires a gain of about 5 per cent per year. Because the measures provide data that can be examined annually, it provides participants timely formative information to make course corrections in the plan, examine the theory of action, and make educational decisions based on data. Although it did not explicitly explain how it will improve the measure over time, earlier sections provide sufficient information to determine that the district's process for continuous improvement would enable it to improve a measure if necessary. This area was rated at the very high level of

quality.

(E)(4) Evaluating effectiveness of investments (5 points)	5	4

(E)(4) Reviewer Comments:

TASD has a relatively strong approach to evaluating the effectiveness of investments. First, it provides a number of sound strategies for reviewing and evaluating investments. For example, the Project Young Engineer Director and grant team will enlist the TASD Federal Programs Coordinator, neighboring districts, and external partners in the effort to review and evaluate grant expenditures. Principals will use checklists to monitor expenditures and determine if they are aligned with project and grant goals. Parent advisory councils will meet monthly to make sure expenditures and goals are aligned. Technology staff will work with teachers, instructional facilitators and principals to ensure technology is being implemented in ways that achieve positive results for students and teachers. Instructional facilitators will be in classrooms 50 per cent of their time to monitor fidelity and collect data as to the effectiveness of the teacher and project elements.These and other activities strengthen the project. There also are processes and timelines that promote evaluation of investment effectiveness. In May and June of each project year teachers and leaders will convene to determine changes required in the following year based on lessons learned. The proposal made clear that these changes may be significant; moving teachers or facilitators around was an example of what could occur. The district provided sufficient evidence that it generally understands how to evaluate effectiveness. But it did not provide evidence that it is prepared to implement a systematic approach. Convening the teachers and principals is an important and worthwhile activity. But it is not clear what will then happen and who and how will the decisions be made to alter those investments, if needed. Because of this the area was rated high middle in quality.

F. Budget and Sustainability (20 total points)

	Available	Score
(F)(1) Budget for the project (10 points)	10	9

(F)(1) Reviewer Comments:

TASD provided a detailed budget and a narrative sufficient in scope and detail to determine whether costs are necessary plus project details that clarified expenditures and provided rationale for specific expenditures.The budget appeared to be reasonable and sufficient to support the development and implementation of the applicant's proposal. Included in the budget were project level budgets. Supporting fund sources were identified and the district asserted it will be seeking other grant funds. One-time investments including the technology hardware were identified. Strategies to ensure long-term sustainability of the personalized learning environments were discussed in earlier sections.For example, the district will task a committee under the direction of the Project Young Engineer leader, with the responsibility of securing funds to sustain the project. TASD will also seek additional magnet grant funding. These are important and potentially productive strategies for strengthening the budget area. The district provided provided project budgets and strong budget summaries that clarified budget detail and rationale for expenditures. TASD earned a very high rating in the budget area.

(F)(2) Sustainability of project goals (10 points)	10	6

(F)(2) Reviewer Comments:

Sustainability of the project was addressed earlier in the proposal and in the previous section by this reviewer. A number of sound strategies were proposed. For example, the district will task a committee under the direction of the Project Young Engineer leader with the responsibility of securing funds to sustain the project. The district also proposed 14 strategies to enhance sustainability of the project. These strategies tended to focus on: (1) creating sufficient notoriety to attract funders (2) developing networks and partners to support, sell, and sustain the program, and (3) seeking grants and other funds. Sound strategies were provided for each. For example, promoting the STEM schools through media and press relations will not only attract students, it may attract philanthropy, and local/national/international partners. The district proposes that it launch a global online fundraising campaign supported by all schools, students, families, and community organizations. Networking with other districts and those on the cutting edge in the use of technology to promote personalized learning environments is a sound approach .Actively hunting for STEM and magnet school grants makes sense. The district did not describe any effort to promote financial support from the state or local government leaders in its plan as requested in the notice, nor did it include an optional choice, a three-year budget after the grant. Promising strategies were identified, but the lack of goal, timelines and resonsible parties also detracted from the quality of the sustainability area. Because of the aforementioned strengths and weaknesses sustainability of project goals was rated at the high middle level of quality.

Competitive Preference Priority (10 total points)

	Available	Score
Competitive Preference Priority (10 total points)	10	0

Competitive Preference Priority Reviewer Comments:

While TASD provided a list of community partners and services in the appendix it did not identify a partnership that met the notice criteria and did not provide a narrative to describe any effort in this area. Therefore, no points were awarded.

Absolute Priority 1

	Available	Score
Absolute Priority 1	Met/Not Met	Met

Absolute Priority 1 Reviewer Comments:

TASD has a vision that is comprehensive, coherent and compelling. If there is a question about the project it centers on its credibility. While the applicant provided a strong rationale for engineering being its theme, there was no rationale and a lack of information about some aspects of their big idea, Young Engineer Project. It is not clear how all students in a rural community will willingly be engaged and successful when their schooling is built on an engineering model or how the young engineer project will help all students become college- and career-ready. It is also not clear whether students will at any time have choices or what will happen with those whose interests range elsewhere. However, the district's vision, strategies and plan are strong. For example,TASD did an excellent job of building on the four assurance areas. Strategies in each of the four areas were sound and and promising, especially standards and assessments. It proposes a unique and potentially powerful way to create personalized learning for preparing students to be college- and career-ready in two of the most significant challenges in America today;science and mathematics. And they wrap their big idea in a unique concept, Young Engineer Project. Its approach and strategy for improving learning through the personalization of strategies, tools, and supports is clearly described. It is an exciting and achievable approach. The budget is sound and includes strategies for sustainability. The composite picture of the application ratings point to meeting the absolute priority. It shows that the district was very strong in 8 areas and weak in only one, ongoing communication and support where it failed to tie its strategies to the elements of a high quality plan. The district has met the requirements of absolute priority.

Total	210	147